

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7743

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1644

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, GW

SUBJ: HARASSMENT OF FRENCH AND WEST GERMAN VOLUNTEERS IN
DAHOMAY

1. DURING PAST WEEK THERE HAVE BEEN TWO SERIOUS CASES OF HARASSMENT OF VOLUNTEERS FROM EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN DAHOMEY. IN THE FIRST, FOUR FRENCH WOMEN BASED AT A MATERNITY/DISPENSARY AT SAGON (ZAGNANADO DISTRICT, ZOU PROVINCE) FLED TO COTONOU FOLLOWING LONG HARASSMENT BY LOCAL MARXIST/LENINIST REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEES. THEY EXPRESSED THE DESIRE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY IMMEDIATELY. AT FIRST THE DAHOMEAN GOVT REFUSED TO PERMIT THEIR DEPARTURE BUT, WHEN FRENCH AMB POINTED OUT THAT SUCH A POSITION WOULD SIGNIFY THAT ALL FRENCH "COOPERANTS" IN DAHOMEY WERE HOSTAGES, A POSITION THE FRENCH GOVT WOULD NOT ACCEPT, THE WOMEN WERE GIVEN THEIR EXIT PERMITS AND LEFT FOR PARIS FORTHWITH. THE FRENCH AMB INFORMED THE DAHOMEAN GOVT THAT THEY WOULD NOMIBE REPLACED; THEIR SLOTS WOULD BE ABOLISHED. A FEW WEEKS EARLIER HE HAD SENT HOME TWO HARASSED FRENCH PHYSICIANS WHO WERE RUNNING THE PORTO-NOVO HOSPITAL, THEIR POSITIONS, TOO, WERE ERASED FROM THE FRENCH AID PROGRAM.

2. ON OCT 25 A TRUCKLOAD OF GENDARMES ARMED WITH TOMMY GUNS
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ENTERED THE COTONOU OFFICE OF THE DIR OF THE WEST GERMAN

VOLUNTEERS. A PERIODIC MEETING OF THE TWELVE VOLUNTEERS FROM THE FRG'S PROGRAM IN MONO PROVINCE WAS TAKING PLACE AT THE TIME. AFTER "STAKING OUT" AND SECURING THE BUILDNG, THE GENDARMES EXPLAINED THAT THEY WERE MAKING A "COURTESY VISIT" WHICH INVOLVED SOME "ROUNTINE CHECKS". THEN, AT GUNPOINT, THEY DEMANDED A LIST OF PERSONS PRESENT, COLLECTED THEIR IDENTIFY DOCUMENTS AND ASKED WHY THE MEETING WAS BEING HELD. THEY DEPARTED BUT TEN MINUTES LATER THEY WERE BACK. THIS TIME THEY DEMANDED AND WERE GIVEN THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING, RELATED PAPERS AND NOTES. THE NEW FRG AMB (HELDT) IS MAKING A STRONG WRITTEN PROTEST AND IS SEEKING AN AUDIENCE WITH THE FORNMIN. HE TELLS US THAT THIS INCIDENT HAS SHAKEN THE GERMAN VOLUNTEERS' MORALE, WHICH HE IS DETERMINED TO RESTORE THROUGH FIRMNESS.

3. COMMENT: IN THE CASE OF THE FRENCH VOLUNTEERS WE UNDERSTAND, FROM A SOURCE IN THE AREA WHERE THEY WERE SERVING, THAT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD DAHOMEY WAS NOT ALTOGETHER PRAISEWORTHY. THERE MAY THEREFORE HAVE BEEN SOME JUSTIFICATION FOR LOCAL CRITICISM OF THEIR WORK AND/OR CONDUCT. HOWEVER, THERE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN NO JUSTIFICATION AT ALL FOR THE GENDARMERIE OPERATION AGAINST THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE WEST GERMAN VOLUNTEERS. LIKE THE CAPUTE OF THE EDUCATION MINISTRY'S "STAGE" FOR SOME OF OUR PC VOLUNTEERS IN AUG, IT WAS A CASE TYPICAL OF POLICE OPERATIONS SINCE THE COMMUNIST AZONHIHO TOOK OVER THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR IN JUNE -- THE AUTHORITIES TAKE ACTIONS FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER.

4. WE ARE STUDYING ALL OF THE PARTICULARS OF THESE INCIDENTS AND OF OTHERS INVOLVING PRESSURE AGAINST DONOR COUNTRY AND INTERNATIONAL DONOR INSTITUTION PROGRAMS, SO THAT WE CAN TAKE MEASURES TO AVOID CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES MIGHT HAVE A PRETEXT FOR ACTION AGAINST OUR PC VOLUNTEERS OR OTHER AMERICAN PERSONNEL.

5. DESPITE THE ABOVE DESCRIBED AND EARLIER INCIDENTS, THE MORE WIDESPREAD AGITATION OF REVOLUTIONARY MILITANTS, THE INTENSIFICATION OF POLICE ACTIVITIES AND CONTROLS, AND INCREASED TENSIONS IN THE COUNTRY, AMERICAN VOLUNTEERS AND OTHER AMERICAN PERSONNEL RETAIN THEIR POISE AND GOOD CHEER, AND OUR

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PROGRAMS HAVE NOT LOST MOMENTUM.
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